

6/24/61

Copy of handwritten letter.

Dear Mr. President,

How thoughtful you are of the simple and good people of this world. Mr. Miles, his wife and two girls are thrilled at the idea of meeting you. They have consulted me about the protocol of addressing you and are, in the current jargon, well briefed. They will call up and make a date for the 4th or 5th. If you should answer the phone and hear a dull thud, it will be because he has fainted. I told him you were likely to do it.

My commencement speech turned out to be a great success because it was to be on a dull subject -- "The Political Responsibilities of Young Citizens," of all things -- and I hit on a happy device to deal with it. We have a very beautiful bit of country road leading to our village which is notoriously defaced by motorists throwing beer cans and all sorts of trash along the roadside, despite signs threatening horrendous penalties. I pointed out that the people who did this might technically be citizens but in reality they treated the home country as pigs treat their pen. But, I said, within the week I had seen truck loads of boy scouts, armed with shopping bags, picking up this trash and making land beautiful once more. They were learning the indispensable foundation of citizenship -- to love some part of this land with all their heart and treat it with disciplined respect and tender care.

Apparently that meant something to the whole audience, children and parents, which generalities about patriotism and duty did not. They gave me a great reception afterwards. On the whole, an interesting evening came out of an expected dull one.

to meet
I am working hard on plans ~~for~~ a Berlin crisis toward the end of the year. It is grim business, but I think that the Joint Chiefs and the State Department have now got the idea and that we shall now make some progress. These Chiefs are ^{not} nearly as good as yours; nor are their staffs. In fact I am shocked -- and I think the Sec. of Defense is, also -- at the shoddy work which comes out of the military. For what we spend on them we deserve something better than what we get.

Kennedy's performance worries and puzzles me. Somehow, he does succeed in being a President, but only in giving the appearance of one, though he did do well with Khrushchev. Both Kennedy and Dean Rusk seem to me to be better when they make speeches than when they act. We have heard a lot about the necessity to make sacrifices but we haven't been asked to make any. There are plenty to make if the Administration would just get started. Time is running out.

With warmest greetings.

/s/ Dean.

June 24, 1961.

Adelphi Pp/Box 166 / Adelson - Truman Correspondence, 1961